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DE RUEHVB #1073 3471023

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

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FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8416

INFO RUEHDL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 001073

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OSD FOR WINTERNITZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2017

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SUBJECT: CROATIAN RESPONSE ON KOSOVO POINTS

REF: STATE 165486

Classified By: Rick Holtzapple, POL/ECON, Reasons 1.4 B/D

¶11. (SBU) POL Chief on December 11 delivered reftel points to Neven Pelicaric, Assistant Foreign Minister with responsibility for Southeast Europe and relations with the EU.

¶12. (C) Pelicaric confirmed what we have heard repeatedly from Croatian officials; Croatia would "not be the very first to do so," but it would recognize Kosovo's independence shortly after it is declared. Ideally, Croatia would recognize along with the bulk of EU members. Croatia remained concerned about Serbian reaction to its neighbors recognizing Kosovo's independence, and believed Belgrade might well decide to sever diplomatic relations with Croatia. The larger number of countries that recognized Kosovo at once, the harder it would be for Belgrade to respond with harsh measures. Pelicaric asked, therefore, that Croatia be kept informed of plans and consultations between the US and the EU on the timing of a Kosovar declaration and for recognition of independence.

¶13. (C) Pelicaric also inquired about planning within Kosovo on how to respond to Serb actions or provocations. How would the US respond, and how would the US hope Croatia and others would respond, if the Northern Kosovo Serbs declared secession from Kosovo upon independence? Clearly, we would all denounce such a move as illegal, but were there other concrete responses envisioned by KFOR or others on the ground in Kosovo?

¶14. (C) Pelicaric agreed that Russian obstruction would prevent the UNSC from being able to take any decision on Kosovo. But Croatia expects Russia will still look to force UNSC discussion of Kosovo in 2008, when Croatia will be joining the Security Council. The Russians clearly can not muster the votes for any action, but he thought Libya, when it held the monthly presidency of the Council, could be responsive to Russian demands for a public debate on Kosovo.

BRADTKE